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Dirge

By Theodore Maynard

If on a day it should befall
That love must have her funeral;
And men weep tears that love is dead,
That never more her gracious head
Can turn to meet their eyes and hold
Their hearts with chains of silky gold;
That never more her hands can be
As dear as was virginity;
That in her coffin there is laid
Beauty, the body of a maid,
The body of one so piteous sweet,
With candles burning at her feet
And cowed monks singing requiem. . . .

I think I would not go with them,
Her lordly lovers, to the place
Where lies that lovely mournful face,
That curving throat and marvellous hair
Under the sconces' yellow flare—
How shall a man be comforted
When love is dead, when love is dead?

But I would make my moan apart,
Keeping my dreams within my heart—
For guarded as a sepulchre
Shall be the house I built for her
Of silver spires and pinnacles
With carrillons of mellow bells,
A house of song for her delight
Whose joy was as the strong sunlight—
But now love's ultimate word is said,
For love is dead, for love is dead!

But even should all hope be lost
Some memory, like a thin white ghost,
Might stealthily move in midnight hours
Among those silent sacred towers,
And glimmer on the moonlit lawn
Until the cold ironic dawn
Arises from her saffron bed—
When love is dead, when love is dead.